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Solving Trade-Offs Between Food Security and Biomass Use: Addressing the Right to Food in Biomass Sustainability Standards

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Abstract

With the emerging bioeconomies in Europe, the demand for biomass will rise. Sustainability concerns led to the development of sustainability regulations in the EU Renewable Energy directive, where ecological criteria play a mayor role. With this political sign private certification standards for biomass proliferated but with major differences regarding environmental and social criteria. While almost all standards address ecological sustainability concerns such as direct land conversion for bioenergy crops, social criteria are only demanded by certification schemes developed in a multi-stakeholder process. Those standards aim to address also local food and nutrition security, but practical approaches which determine the impact of a producer on the local food security situation lack. Approaches propose a comprehensive measurement using classical methods like house hold surveys to detect impacts on local food and nutrition security. In contrast to that, this research project uses a different approach to assess impacts on local food security through enhanced biomass production. By means of the “Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security” combined with the four dimensions of food and nutrition security (access, availability, utilisation and stability) we defined a conceptual framework to identify indicators which ensure the Right to adequate Food. The framework lead to the selection of 16 main guidelines which have to be addressed by a certification scheme which shall guarantee that the Human Right to adequate Food is not violated by the carrier of that label. The indicators represent an ideal set, which, if included as a whole, encourage the implementation of the Right to Food Guidelines in sustainability standards.

Keywords: Biomass, right to food, sustainability standards